

## **From Milk, a Candy: Marketing Regional Strategy in a Solidarity Perspective**

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### **Abstract:**

**Background:** The Solidarity Economy is an of the new alternative forms of income generation. For their consolidation, solidarity enterprises can rely on marketing to develop strategies that generate value for consumers and society. Thus, this article aims to propose a marketing mix that adds value to the researched enterprise, based on the characteristics of the Solidarity Economy.

**Materials and Methods:** A field research with a qualitative approach and a descriptive objective was carried out in an enterprise that produces and sells doce de leite. The material was obtained through a visit and interview with the producer, in addition to access to websites, visits to supermarkets and an interview with an owner of a doce de leite factory, then performing the SWOT Analysis.

**Results:** The marketing mix will consist of doce de leite gourmet, in glass packaging. The price to be charged must be close to the region's premium candies, as an indication of quality. The distribution will be through direct sales, sales in supermarkets, and partnerships with restaurants. The promotion will feature digital and printed media, and product tasting.

**Conclusion:**For the marketing mix to be applied, cooperation between the enterprises is required, as well as financing from the federal government.

**Key Word:**Marketing; Solidarity economy; Marketing Mix.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The structural changes in the world, whether economic or social, have weakened the traditional model of capitalist labor relations worldwide. With these changes, the increase in informality, the precariousness of formal relationships and unemployment were stated as trends, leading workers to abdicate their social rights in search of survival (Ministério do Trabalho e Emprego - MTE, 2015). However, with these changes, new forms of work organization have emerged, in search of alternatives to generate income, such as the Solidarity Economy (Cleps& Amorim, 2018).

The Solidarity Economy is a set of economic activities of production, distribution, consumption, savings, and credit, organized in the form of self-management. Also characteristic of this economy is the concern with sustainable development, combining economic growth with environmental protection (Singer, 2003, MTE, 2015).

Prado (2008) points out that the Solidarity Economy goes far beyond income generation. It's characteristics allow to affirm that it brings proposals for changes in interpersonal relations and with the environment, in which cooperation, the preservation of natural resources, equal power in decision-making and responsibility to the local community of the enterprise are principles that guide the Solidarity Economy. In this context, the consumer assumes an importance in the consolidation of a new economic-social practice, because, by his consumption, he chooses which projects will benefit, that is, when there is a choice for local enterprises, there is a reduction in the concentration of income, contributing to a greater balance in society.

Given the importance of the consumer in the consolidation of solidarity ventures, it is emphasized that a very useful tool for any organization is marketing, defined by the American Marketing Association (2013) as a set of processes to create, communicate, deliver and exchange offers that have value for consumers, customers, partners and for society in general.

Marketing activities can take many forms. McCarthy (1997) and Kotler and Keller (2006) state that these can be described in terms of the marketing mix, which has been defined as the set of marketing tools that the company uses to pursue its marketing objectives. These tools were grouped into four groups, called 4P's of marketing, namely: product; price; place; promotion. Each of the tools must be designed to offer a benefit to the customer. Therefore, the marketing mix must be decided to exert influence on the final consumers, as well as the commercial channels. Thus, for each compound in the marketing mix, the following must be taken into account:

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in the product - its varieties, quality, design, characteristics, brand name, packaging, sizes, services, guarantees, returns; price - list price, discounts, concessions, payment term, financing conditions; in promotion - sales promotion, advertising, sales force, public relations, direct marketing; in the place - channels, coverage, variety, locations, stock, transportation (McCarthy, 1997, Kotler & Keller, 2006).

Kotler and Keller (2006) also highlight the marketing planning process, which consists of analyzing opportunities, selecting target markets, designing strategies, developing programs, and managing the marketing effort. Despite following a logical process, it must be done taking into account the forces that shape the company's marketing strategy, which are: the company itself; the suppliers; the distributors; resellers; target customers; the demographic environment; economic; natural; technological; political-legal; and sociocultural. It is in this context that speak of the SWOT Analysis, which consists of the global assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the company and the threats and opportunities of the environment (Piercy & Giles, 1989). It is through this analysis that the company better understands the forces that act on the company and, from this, develop a marketing mix (Kotler & Keller, 2006).

In view of this presented literature, the objective of the present study is to propose a marketing mix that adds value to the enterprise, based on the characteristics of the Solidarity Economy.

## **II. MATERIAL AND METHODS**

This research has a qualitative approach, with descriptive purpose and carries out a field study (Andrade, 1999; Vergara, 2005; Creswell, 2010) in a family farming enterprise that produces doce de leite on a small scale, once that its production and sale, practically only by order, is a complement to the main product, the cheese. The enterprise was chosen for convenience, as it was already a participant in an extension project at the University to which the researchers are linked.

For the proposition of the marketing compound, the SWOT Analysis was followed (Piercy & Giles, 1989), to know the internal strengths and weaknesses of the enterprise, as well as the threats and opportunities present in the external environment.

In the internal analysis, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the candy producer, based on a list proposed by Kotler and Keller (2006), in addition to a visit to the family enterprise, located in the city of Uberlândia, Minas Gerais/Brazil. It is noteworthy that this empirical material was collected in 2013 and in a single day, respecting the availability of the interviewee.

In turn, the external analysis was done through access to news sites, for the knowledge of the political-legal, technological, socio-cultural, natural, economic, and demographic macro-environmental forces. In addition to the websites, visits were made to large supermarket chains and to the Municipal Market of Uberlândia, for the knowledge and analysis of the strategies adopted by companies that also offer dulce de leite, being, therefore, competitors of the market compound that this article intends to elaborate. The research also included a semi-structured interview with an owner of a doce de leite factory in Uberlândia, allowing a more in-depth knowledge of some practices adopted for candy in the city, in which the family enterprise already operates and for which the new offer will also be proposed.

## **III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The macroenvironment**

An analysis of the legal, political, technological, sociocultural, natural, and demographic environment that influences the manufacturers of doce de leite is presented. Despite being the same forces on different organizations, what will be a threat and what will be an opportunity will depend on the internal analysis of each enterprise.

As for the legal environment, there are laws that regulate the conditions necessary for the operation of a doce de leite industry. The doce de leite, characterized as an agricultural product of animal origin, follows Law 8,171, of January 17, 1991, which regulates the Brazilian agricultural policy, defining the objectives and institutional competencies, foresees resources and establishes actions and agricultural policy instruments, related to agricultural, agro-industrial activities and planning of fishing and forestry activities. Following this law, we will present some aspects that affect the dulce de leite, mainly involving the issue of hygiene of the place of production.

The establishments that produce doce de leite must be in regions free from undesirable odors, smoke, dust and other contaminants, in addition to not being exposed to floods. The area must allow the internal circulation of vehicles, which is paved, facilitating the arrival of raw materials and the exit of finished products. It is mandatory that installations, equipment, and furniture throughout the industry are easy to clean, resistant to moisture and vapors. The floor must be waterproof, resistant to impacts, acids, non-slip. The discharge ports for the external environment must have rodent-proof metal or devices with the same purpose. It should be added that the walls must be covered with light tiles up to a minimum height of two meters, the place must be

sufficiently lighted and ventilated naturally, through suitable windows or openings and the water used must be potable.

The premises where edible products are handled or processed must have sinks and an odorless soap that allow proper hand hygiene, in addition to warnings about the mandatory and the correct way to wash hands. Separated from the industrial sector, changing rooms and toilets must remain. The establishment must have a Sanitation Plan, containing basic information about the nature of the cleaning and sanitizing material of the various premises, equipment, machinery, and utensils, as well as the technique used.

In particular, the doce de leite must be made with pasteurized milk and stored in a cool and airy place. It must be transported in an isothermal vehicle, so that, at the time of delivery to the market, the temperature of the product is within the limits established by law. Its packaging and labeling must comply with the provisions of the Regulation on Sanitary Inspection and Inspection of Products of Animal Origin and complementary legislation, as well as all those from public bodies that legislate on the subject.

As for the political environment, it is necessary to highlight the National Family Agriculture Program (PRONAF). This program helps family farmers to develop and, thus, overcome their limitations in relation to large companies, through financing individual or collective projects. In the municipality of Uberlândia, for which the marketing compound will be proposed, there is no specific program that benefits producers of products of animal origin, in this case, the dulce de leche.

Regarding the technological environment, the Instituto de Desenvolvimento Industrial de Minas Gerais (2013) shows that a doce de leite industry has the following phases: reception, to pack the milk that arrives from the farms, which are taken to the factory's reception platform; selection, for measuring the milk considered suitable for the manufacture of the candy that will then be strained; standardization, skimming the milk to establish the desired fat pattern; industrialization, where the concentration of the mixture of milk and sugar occurs; packaging, phase in which the packaging is filled.

For these steps to be fulfilled, the Institute of Industrial Development of Minas Gerais (2013) brings the necessary equipment: a stainless steel tank for receiving milk; a tank with a painted iron cover for washing brass; a graduated bucket with stainless steel spout; a creamer; a double-walled pan for making doce de leite, with an exhaust fan and a mechanical stirrer; a digger; a wood-fired boiler; a 2m x 1m stainless steel mobile table; a scale; laboratory equipment.

Regarding the socio-cultural environment, in the diet of the Southeast region of Brazil, are part of, in addition to other foods, milk and its derivatives (Cavedon, Fantinel, Ávila & Valadão Júnior, 2010), and the state of Minas Gerais/Brazil being responsible for a third of the national milk production, in addition to having the largest dairy industry in the country, according to the Minas Gerais Industrial Development Institute (2013). Therefore, it is necessary to affirm that the proposal for a doce de leite in this region is relevant, given its socio-cultural issues. But, there is a tendency to worry about healthy eating, because of the health problems caused by poor diet.

As for the natural environment of milk and its derivatives, Carneiro and Rodrigues (2012) show that the period of greatest abundance of milk supply in Brazil is between October and March, a period marked by intense rains, in which producers seek new ways of using milk on the farms, and one of those ways is the doce de leite. The production of doce de leite does not happen only when there is an excess of raw material, however, the lack of this can harm its production. With this perspective, we see the importance of cooperativism among family farmers, since the shortage of raw material from one farmer can be solved by buying raw material from another farmer.

**Table 1:** Characteristics of doce de leite macroenvironment

<b>Environment</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Legal	Law No. 8,171, of January 17, 1991.
Political	National Family Farming Program (PRONAF).
Technological	The equipment needed for production is defined by the Instituto de Desenvolvimento Industrial de Minas Gerais.
Sociocultural	The state of Minas Gerais/Brazil is a national highlight for the production and consumption of milk and dairy products.
Natural	The rainy season makes family farmers look for new ways to use milk.
Demographic	The city of Uberlândia has more than 600 thousand inhabitants, most of them female. The average monthly income in the urban area is R\$ 3,119.74, while in the rural area, the income is R\$ 1,895.04.

Source: prepared by the authors.

Finally, there is the demographics and income of Uberlândia/MG, the city for which the marketing proposal will be prepared. According to the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE - 2010), the

city of Uberlândia has 604,013 inhabitants, of which 309,099 are female and 294,914 are male. In the past twenty-two years, the city has grown 164.55%. As in other cities, the elderly population in the city grew by 63.9% in the last ten years. As for social classes, consumers in classes A and B have monthly income ranging from R\$ 2,762.33 to R\$ 8,123.55. These classes represent a large part of Brazilian consumption. Consumers in class C have monthly income ranging from R\$ 1,126.00 to R\$ 2,007.00. The average monthly income of households in Uberlândia, in the urban area, is R\$ 3,119.74, while in the rural area, the income is R\$ 1,895.04. The characteristics of the macroenvironment were summarized in Table 1.

### **The external environment**

To know the market in which the family enterprise operates, visits were made to three supermarkets in the city of Uberlândia, and a visit to the Municipal Market, to learn about the practices adopted by its competitors. During these visits, five brands of dulce de leche were found: Itambé®, DocesFama®, Flamboyant®, Reserva de Minas®, DocesJoaninha®. It was decided to analyze the 680-gram packages. Itambé and Flamboyant are the most popular brands, offering consumers the dulce de leche at an average price of 8 reais. The DoceFama brand has an average price of 11 reais. Reserva de Minas and DocesJoaninha have a premium positioning, selling their products in the Municipal Market. The first brand has an average price of 15 reais, and DocesJoaninha sells its products at a price of 18 reais. The latter still has an e-commerce, differentiating itself from the others, which use only supermarkets as intermediaries in the marketing of dulce de leche. It should be noted that the packaging is in tin, glass or plastic, and does not have a differential between them.

We also searched for two restaurants in Uberlândia, for information on the production or purchase of dulce de leche on the menu dishes. However, only the information that the candy is purchased was passed on, without being informed of who bought it. In addition, another limitation in the market analysis was to look for milk suppliers for these companies, to understand whether the milk is collected at the company itself or if it is purchased from a third party. The Table 2 summarizes these marketing strategies adopted by competing companies.

**Table 2:** Marketing strategies adopted by competing companies

<b>Placements</b>	Popular product and premium product, based on price and place of sale.
<b>Prices</b>	Between R\$ 8.00 and R\$ 18.00, considering packages of 680 grams.
<b>Packaging</b>	Canned, glass, plastic.
<b>Selling points</b>	Supermarkets, Municipal Market, and ecommerce

Source: prepared by the authors.

### **The internal environment**

The analysis of the internal environment was made during a visit to the family enterprise, complemented by an interview. The enterprise has cheese as the main product of production and sale, while doce de leite is a complement, made practically only to order. The production is artisanal and on a small scale, given the little raw material for its manufacture, that is, there is little milk for its production. The producer said that the production of doce de leite is done on the stove, because, according to her, if done in the wood oven, the smoke would affect the flavor of the sweets. It is added that, because the production is on a small scale, the producer does not have exclusive technological equipment for the manufacture of the candy.

The product is sold at a low price compared to the market, as the project has some limitations that hinder its commercialization on a larger scale. Sometimes, the doce de leite is also sold in Uberlândia, more precisely in the Jardim das Palmeiras neighborhood, as it is the closest to the enterprise. This sales process is characterized by a direct sale, in which the producer goes from door to door offering the doce de leite. She also reported that there are no fixed customers, however, consumers who buy doce de leite say they are satisfied with the product purchased. Finally, it should be noted that the researched enterprise does not have the seal granted by the prefecture of Uberlândia for the commercialization of the animal product in the city. The characteristics described here are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Internal characteristics of the researched enterprise

<b>Marketed products</b>	Cheese - main product. Doce de leite - complementary product.
<b>Production</b>	Handcrafted, on a small scale, and to order.
<b>Price</b>	Low, in relation to the market.
<b>Ways to sell</b>	Direct selling.
<b>Customers</b>	There are no fixed customers, but those who buy do report satisfaction.

Source: prepared by the authors.

**Strategic analysis**

With the information of the macroenvironment, the external and internal environments of the researched enterprise, a strategic analysis was carried out, through the SWOT Analysis. This analysis is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure1:** SWOT Analysis of the researched enterprise

<p><b>S</b>TRENGTHS</p> <p>Consumer satisfaction; Product quality recognized by consumers; Capable and dedicated workforce; Relationship with the consumer.</p>	<p><b>W</b>EAKNESSES</p> <p>Customer retention; Geographic coverage; Capital availability; Large-scale production.</p>
<p><b>O</b>PPORTUNITIES</p> <p>Financing programs; Cultural consumption in the region; Income of potential consumers.</p>	<p><b>T</b>HREATS</p> <p>Concern about food; Available technologies; Fluctuations in milk supply; Competition.</p>

Source: prepared by the authors.

As for the potential, it was found that consumers who buy the doce de leite from the researched enterprise feel very satisfied with the quality of the product, telling the producer about it. It was also found that the workforce is capable and dedicated, having, and building a good relationship with the consumer.

However, weaknesses show that there are no practices for customer retention, which affects the sales of doce de leite. It was seen that there is little geographic coverage, given that consumers go to the property to buy the cheese and, sometimes, they also buy the candy, in addition to commercialization only in the Jardim das Palmeiras neighborhood, in Uberlândia. This weakness is because the project does not have the seal of the Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária (ANVISA), for commercialization. The seal would help with capital availability, another weakness of the family enterprise. With the seal, the producer could sell more products and in more points of the city of Uberlândia, which would help her a lot in obtaining capital to invest, little by little, in the production of the candy. It is necessary to emphasize that, despite this interest in expanding the commercialization of the candy, the enterprise does not have enough milk to meet a greater demand.

As for the opportunities of the macroenvironment, we have financing programs available, such as the case of PRONAF, which would help enterprises like the one surveyed. The milk candy offer has in the city of Uberlândia, as well as throughout the state of Minas Gerais, a cultural consumption of milk and its derivatives, thus finding potential consumers for it. It is worth mentioning that the average monthly income in the city of Uberlândia reaches more than 3 thousand reais; income considered satisfactory for the purchase of this product.

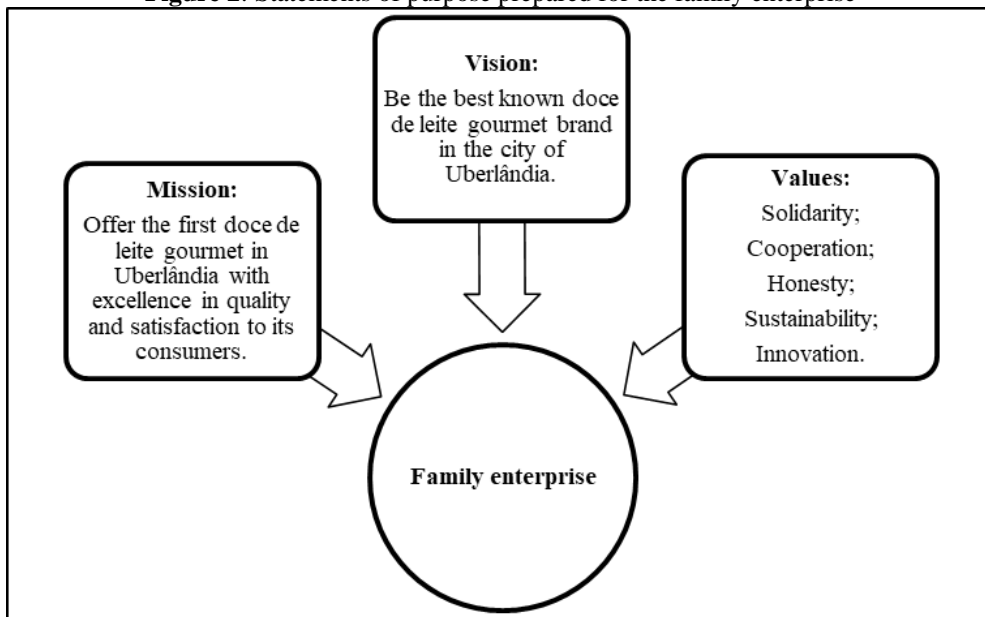
Finally, in relation to threats, it was found that there is a concern with food, mainly because of the problems caused by poor food intake. In the case of doce de leite, the threat lies in the concern with diabetes, a disease resulting from the lack of insulin or its inability to exert its effects properly, causing an increase in blood glucose. It is added that the lack of available technologies employed in the enterprise, impairs its competitiveness, even more when it comes to increasing production. The supply of milk also fluctuates throughout the year; a natural issue, but one that hinders the production of candies, as milk is its main raw material. It is noteworthy that, as it is a product of cultural consumption in the city and region, competition is great, many of which have been active in the market for years. A new product needs to differentiate itself.

**The new market offer**

The elaboration of the marketing proposal for doce de leite for the city of Uberlândia/MG is based on the reflection of the strategic analysis, containing micro and macro-environmental analyzes, as well as the

internal analysis. Initially, as the researched enterprise had not formalized its declarations of purpose, the mission, vision and values were elaborated, presented in Figure 2.

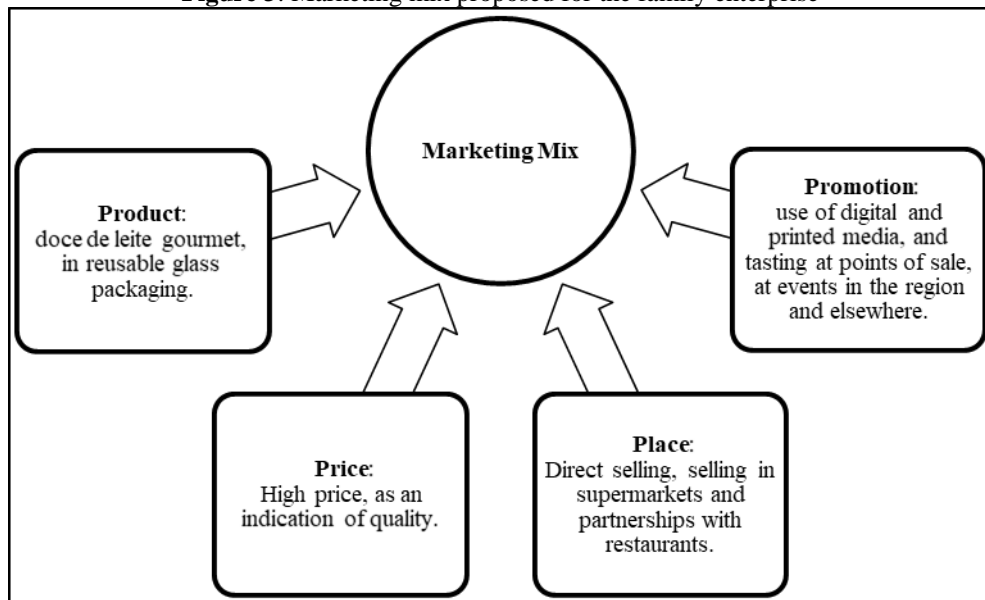
**Figure 2:** Statements of purpose prepared for the family enterprise



Source: prepared by the authors.

The purpose statements presented in Figure 2 will guide the achievement of organizational objectives, and the marketing mix proposed in Figure 3.

**Figure 3:** Marketing mix proposed for the family enterprise



Source: prepared by the authors.

### Product

In relation to the Product, doce de leite gourmet is proposed. The idea of the gourmet is that the name is associated with haute cuisine, referring to high quality and more elaborate gastronomic experiences. A gourmet product is differentiated from the competition and adds value, given that its difference is in the form of production. The proposal is that production is no longer on a small scale, and it is necessary to invest in the machines already mentioned in this article to increase production. It is an expanded product, as it exceeds basic consumer expectations. In addition, four flavors are proposed: the traditional; with red fruits; with chocolate; with nuts.

For the production of doce de leite gourmet, it is necessary to carefully select the raw materials that will be used, so that the pasty consistency is fluid and without crystallization. As for red fruits, chocolate, and nuts, they can be bought in supermarkets in the city, and this choice will influence the added value of the product. The proposal here is to offer an expanded product on a larger scale, covering the entire city of Uberlândia. For this, partnerships with milk producers are pertinent, benefiting both enterprises, because, as it was seen, the milk collected in the researched enterprise is not enough for a greater production of the candy. In other words, to focus on the production of candies, it will be necessary to create a network of collaboration and cooperation.

As for the packaging, it is suggested that it has a different design, to increase differentiation with competitors and draw the buyer's attention. At first, it is believed that the use of packaging with a different design is not feasible for the enterprise, given the limited availability of capital. But it is reiterated, the packaging would serve as an eye-catcher for the consumer, as well as justification for the price, which will be presented below. It is suggested to use a glass packaging, which allows the candy to be checked, in addition to being able to be reused by the buyer at his home. As for the label, it is necessary that it has the ingredients used in the product, the net weight, its nutritional information, the ANVISA seal, as the product will be offered only to the municipality of Uberlândia, and written 'doce de leite' followed by its name or brand.

### **Price**

Regarding to the Price, a high price is proposed, as an indication of quality. After the research conducted, it was found that the company that makes the Joanhia® Sweets is the main direct competitor in the premium positioning prepared for the candy, selling at an average price of 18 reais. It is suggested that the average price of doce de leite gourmet sold in Uberlândia is in the range of 15 to 17 reais, thus being below the competitor's price. Remember the other doces de leite, sold at a lower price. Even though they are not direct competitors for the proposed positioning for the candy, they are indirect competitors, reaching consumers with lower income or who are not willing to pay more for a candy. Therefore, all the rest of the marketing mix already mentioned here must be effective to justify such a price.

### **Place**

In relation to the Place, it is proposed to continue direct selling, adding the sale in supermarkets and partnerships with restaurants. Direct selling is a distribution channel already used by the researched enterprise. The suggestion for continuing to operate in this channel is to reach more consumers, including those who prefer the convenience of having the product offered at their doorstep. With the ANVISA seal, it will also be possible to sell in supermarkets, where the main competitors of the new offer are located. In these, it is recommended to use merchandising, containing an exclusive shelf for doce de leite gourmet, strategically positioned next to the cheeses, since there are many people who enjoy them together.

As for the partnership with restaurants, the proposal is that the doce de leite gourmet adds value to the dishes on the menu, having its name/brand referenced in it, making it recognized by consumers. In order for the partnership to materialize, it is suggested to disclose the way the candy is made, the added value that the restaurant will have when having a gourmet milk candy made in the city, in a cooperative and supportive manner, and possible price discounts, given the large volume of purchases. It is also necessary to purchase a medium vehicle that helps in the distribution and commercialization of doce de leite.

### **Promotion**

In relation to Promotion, we propose the use of digital marketing, printed material and tasting. As the proposal is to increase the number of buyers of doce de leite, digital marketing will be done through a website and social media, highlighting the differences that the candy has over the others, its way of manufacture, suggestions of recipes that lead the even in the ingredients. The proposal is to take advantage of the immediate interaction that these means provide, informing and obtaining information from people that helps in improving the marketing mix over time. The graphic material will be used with customers who do not have internet, or who do not use it to interact with the company; in this case, it was designed for corporate customers, as the restaurants.

As it is a new product in an existing market, tasting would be the main tool for promoting doce de leite gourmet. The places considered were: at the airport, where there is a large flow of people who can spread the quality of the candy to various parts of Brazil; in the restaurants themselves that establish a partnership with the enterprise; at important events in the city; and at the Municipal Market, which has become a tourist spot in the city. Tasting is also a way of promoting the brand and the product itself. Therefore, the better the experience offered to the consumer, the greater the chances of the consumer making the purchase. It is not enough just to offer the person a tasting of the candy, it is necessary to take advantage of the moment to create a unique experience, also based on good service.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The research objective was achieved. The proposition of the marketing mix for the doce de leite was based on the premise of the Solidarity Economy, through which the need for cooperation between enterprises is understood, so that, in fact, the compound is applied. This cooperation also allows for improvement in the self-management processes of these family farming enterprises, in addition to sustainable development, which reconciles economic growth and environmental protection.

It is considered that the difficulty in achieving the proposed marketing mix is in obtaining financing for the necessary investments to be made. However, these investments are necessary, due to the benefits they will bring to society, since family farming is important for Brazil's economy.

Although the proposal is restricted to the regional context of Uberlândia, the macroenvironment shows the possibility of expanding the commercialization of doce de leite gourmet, which leads to suggest this as the object of new studies.

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